



IncidentNews.gov Internet Site

Spills seriously strain the normal abilities of organizations to gather, process, and distribute information. Added to the problems of supporting local multi-agency decisions within the Unified Command, there are often pressures from groups not directly involved in response operations and the public for rapid access to information about the spill.

Spill Operations and the Internet

A Unified Command can provide command post staff, official personnel not on-scene, and the public with specifically tailored information by using the Internet to communicate with the public and the response community at large. The Hazardous Materials Response Division of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) worked with the U.S. Coast Guard to establish IncidentNews.gov as an Internet portal for incident operations.

Spill information on the Internet keeps the local populous informed and provides a direct route for public feedback on the response. It is also a valuable tool for informing those outside the command post, such as RRT members, about the spill situation. These supporting organizations can more quickly respond to FOSC calls for assistance when they have up-to-date incident information.

Communicating incident information on IncidentNews.gov has three objectives:

- Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of response operations through better information sharing;
- Allowing remote government and private sector groups to monitor operations with a minimum of intrusion; and
- Maintaining direct communications with the public to build confidence in response operations.

Incident-specific Internet sites rapidly disseminate information about the response to target audiences inside and outside the command post. Topics on the site can include press releases, Polreps, photographs, oil spill trajectories, and maps depicting the status of cleanup operations. IncidentNews.gov is designed to work with the U.S. Coast Guard's OSC2 system.

How to get on the IncidentNews.Gov site

When the Unified Command determines that IncidentNews.gov will be a component of the ICS, the FOSC or Information Officer can request that the NOAA Scientific Support Coordinator activate IncidentNews.gov for a spill or drill. At that time the following decisions will need to be made:

- The scope of IncidentNews.gov coverage, including whether operations will include a within-command post system, public areas, and response only areas;
- Information topics to be included in each area of the site;
- Delegating clearance authority for each information topic; and
- Posting frequency for each information topic;

The site design for IncidentNews.gov is preestablished to provide consistent user access, rapid updating, and appropriate security. Alteration of the site for a specific spill need only focus on the information content and not the site structure or appearance. Adding a new incident to the site takes about 1 hour from the time of request.

At the conclusion of response activities, information on IncidentNews.gov can be archived to CD-ROM and made available for public distribution. On-line information is transitioned to the Historical Incidents section of the site for long term access. The Historical Incidents section is a great resource for researching lessons learned. Go to: **<http://www.incidentnews.gov>** for examples of this site in action.

Contact your local SSC to establish a spill or drill on **<http://www.incidentnews.gov>**



